Castlemaine Naturalist

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The Enfield Grevillea - endemic to Enfield. From *Discovering Ballarat's Bushland* .

The VFNCA joins the computer age

The Victorian Field Naturalists Clubs Association now has a web site, and facilities to share information electronically. The Association is using *My Connected Community,* (or MC2) which is a State Government initiative, and which is conducted by the State Library.

The VFNCA now has a very simple web page. The address of the webpage is www.mc2.vicnet.net.au/users/vfnca/index.html

The VFNCA also has a notice board, a calender, and an area where documents can be stored. At the time of writing, documents include the Ballarat Campout information and booking sheet, and the plant list made by some of those who joined with the Geelong Field Naturalists Club at the Pyrite Ranges last weekend. When an item is posted on the notice board, an email is sent to all members, advising them of the addition.

It is expected that as well as campout information, the Association's minutes and agendas, campout reports, and information about club office bearers, meeting times and addresses will be posted. Clubs could also place copies of submissions that they make, for the information of members.

MC2 also provides a *forum.* Members are able to post items to the forum. The item is then sent automatically to all members as an email. The forum could be used to alert members and clubs of government discussion papers and documents, publications and other items of interest.

MC2 also provides facilities to have on-line discussions. A group could meet, via a computer, to discuss, say, a response to the daft firewood strategy.

The material can only be accessed by those who have joined MC2. Joining is free.

It is possible to protect information in the files by placing a password on the files. If a

password is used, you will need to contact your Club secretary for the password, or contact me. There is no immediate plan to use a password.

To join MC2.

1 You must have an email address.

2 Open your browser, and go to www.mc2.vicnet.net.au

3 You will find an area for new users. Follow the instructions.

You will be given a temporary password. You are able to change this to a more secure password.

To join the VFNCA community Group, once you have logged on to the MC2 page.

1 Click on *join a community* and follow instructions. The community to join is called VFNCA, and is in the Communities section.

2 An email will be sent by MC2, to the person in charge of the site, seeking approval of your membership.

3 An email will be sent to you by the coordinator, approving your membership.

You can withdraw from the VFNCA community at any time. You also have the opportunity to join other community groups. You will also be given space on the MC2 computers, where you can store files, and have your own web page. You can, if you wish, use the web page builder in MC2, to make your web page. You can also attend training sessions conducted by MC2. Information about this is on the MC2 home page.

The future.

This is an exciting development. The VFNCA has member clubs in Gippsland, Warrnambool and Portland, Mildura and Albury Wodonga and places in between. Communication is difficult, and travel is a major expense. The Government has provided these facilities to help with communication between community groups. It is ideal for us.

It is desirable that as many field naturalists as possible join. If you are on the net, please join up.

Ern Perkins.

Book Review

Discovering Ballarat's Bushland

A guide to 34 selected natural places in the Ballarat Region.

Published to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Ballarat Field Naturalists Club, and written and published by the club. The publication was supported by the Ballarat Community Grants Program and the Victorian Field Naturalists Clubs Association.

44 pages, 8 in colour. Cost to Field Naturalists Club members is $10 ($12 posted).

The Ballarat Field Naturalists Club is to be congratulated for their initiative in producing this book. It was a club effort, with the survey work, writing and photography being shared among club members.

The book deals with 34 areas within a 50-kilometre radius of Ballarat. Some are close to Ballarat (e.g. Lake Wendouree) and some further away (e.g. the Brisbane Ranges, and the Wombat Forest). For each location, there is a section on the location of the area and how to get to it from Ballarat, a VicRoads map reference, the facilities if any, an outline of the significant flora and significant plant associations, the significant fauna, an outline of the geology, and historical information. Where there are other sources of information available, such as Parks or DNRE brochures, this is mentioned. A publication such as this could not give detailed information or detailed maps, and wisely, this is not attempted.

There is also an introduction to the geology of the Ballarat Area and a map showing the locations of the sites discussed. The photographs are clear, and show some of the diversity of habitat and diversity of plants and animals.

The book will be of value to the residents of Ballarat, and the number sampling the sites is likely to increase as they use this book. It will be an invaluable resource to visitors to Ballarat who wish to see something of the plants and animals of the district.

Its greatest value will, I think, to help show both residents and visitors that these remnants of the bushland are not all the same, and that the natural history is a diverse, and related in part to the geology and landscape. The publication of this book will help to make the Ballarat area better appreciated, and make the future of the bushland more secure.

The book is a challenge to, to other clubs, to produce similar introductions to the natural history of their areas.

[Copies will be available for sale at the meeting. Cost $10.00] Ern Perkins

Members of the Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club have been invited to the Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture.

Platypus - Research and Conservation

Speaker Geoff Williams, Australian Platypus Conservancy

Friday Sept 6, 2002 at 8 pm at the Ballarat Horticultural Centre, cr Gilles St and Gregory St, Ballarat.

Free admission. "Come and find out why this creature is so special!"

The Bung Bong State Forest (reprinted from VicBabbler no 61, 2001)

"This is one of the few places left in Victoria where you can find old-growth Box-Ironbark. Well spaced, towering 200-400 year old Ironbark, Grey Box and Red Stringybark, with a sparse but diverse understorey were an impressive sight. Few people have seen this sort of vista and the contrast between the large old trees on private land and the dense spindly, multi-stemmed 'scrub' on the Sate Forest side of the fence could not have been greater."

NAPE and Newstead Landcare Group present
Biodiversity Bush Dance
Sat 17 August at 7.30 pm in the Newstead Community Centre
Tickets : $5.00/$15 family
Prizes for the best costume (dress as your favourite endangered species!)
Dance prizes too.
Bar available on site. Food for sale.
Book early for this fun evening.
Tickets from: Boots Café 5476 2555 Food Garden 5476 2078
Enquiries 5476 2662

Observations

- Magpies are swooping, and Yellow-rumped Thornbills are nesting. (C&L Moody)
- Choughs have 12 in the family, and are resident. They may have up to 60 'guests'. (Zoe Thomas)
- Wood Duck are nesting in a nesting box. (Dianne Thomson)
- 60 to 80 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos have been working their way along Happy Valley. (Ken Dredge) and 80 have been seen at Badgers Keep. (Barbara Maund)
- Eastern Yellow Robins have been near the house. (Robin van Smeerdijk)
- Other observations have included Blue Tongues against the fence in the sunshine and an albino Sparrow (Zoe Thomas), a Water Rat at Cairn Curran (Miki), and a Nankeen Kestrel on telephone wires in White Gum Road (Geraldine Harris).
- Large flocks of Straw-necked Ibis have been seen in recent weeks, e.g. at Yapeen, Campbells Creek, Barkers Creek and Harcourt North. (Margaret Badminton et al)
- A Nankeen Kestrel was seen diving on a Black-shouldered Kite at the Creswick Road overpass to the Western Highway at Ballarat. (Ern Perkins)
- A Little Eagle was observed flying over Wesley Hill Market on 20 July. (George Broadway)

- More than a thousand Long-billed Corellas have been seen at Yapeen recently. (Margaret Badminton)
- Yellow Robins have been on the van Gemert property at Muckleford. (Hans van Gemert)
- Scarlet Robins have been seen in greater numbers at Glenlyon this year. (Margaret Badminton)
- Yellow-billed Spoonbill has been feeding on the dam (at Glenluce) each day for three weeks. (Richard Piesse).

U3A/CFNC Bird Watching 25 July, 2002

Only three managed to brave the very frosty morning, to birdwatch at the Chewton Cemetery. It is one of the better birding areas in the district. It has surrounding bushland, grassland, open and dense shrublands, several creeks, indigenous and non-indigenous native trees, and some exotics. A little further on there are the dams of the Rod Shop, which were also visited. Smaller birds seemed fewer than usual. Notable was the blue wren, imitating a treecreeper by climbing up the bark of a yellow box. The corellas spent most of the time investigating tree hollows. The Wood Duck were seen perched and flying around some large blue gums. The final list had more than 20 species.

Hoary-headed Grebe 1
Black Duck 5
Hardhead 1
Wood Duck 4
Masked Lapwing 1
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo 6
Long-billed Corella 10
Crimson Rosella 3
Kookaburra h
Yellow Robin 2
Blue Wren 10+
Willie Wagtail 1
White-browed Scrub-wren 6+
Grey Shrike-thrush h
Blackbird 1
Brown Thornbill 1
Yellow Thornbill 6
Weebill 4
Brown-headed Honeyeater 6+
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater 1
Magpie 5+
Australian Raven 4

Time 8.30-10.00

E Perkins

Firth Park Bird List July 13, 2002

The CFNC has an annual fungi-spotting excursion. Sometimes it is to Bullarto, or Firth Park, and sometimes closer to home. The excursions are usually planned some months before hand, and often during a dry autumn. Although there had been some rain, and the pathways had puddles, fungi were not abundant. Bird life was also sparse. Perhaps they did not appreciate the blast of music coming from the campers. Notable was the Crescent Honeyeater, which was heard long before one was sighted.

The bird list was

Eastern Yellow Robin 3
Superb Fairy-wren 2
White-throated Treecreeper 1
White-eared Honeyeater 1
Yellow-faced Honeyeater 1
Crescent Honeyeater 2
Eastern Spinebill 1

2.30 - 3.50 pm. 6 observers. E Perkins

From the Business Meeting

Fire Management of Forests. A letter has been received from the St Arnaud Field Naturalists Club, expressing concern at current practices by DNRE. Some points made include:

Bushland is categorised as zone 1 (mostly around towns, and up to a kilometre wide), zone 2 (strips and corridors to break up large areas) and zone 3 (most of the remainder). Zones 1 and 2 are burned regularly. The zones have been reviewed recently, so they may differ from those in past years.

Fuel loads are calculated taking into account ground litter, bark on trees and the understorey layer. The fuel load is used to trigger the burning activities.

The St Arnaud FNC has concerns about the frequency of fire, the way in which burns are carried out, and insufficient monitoring, and suggest some alternatives to current practices.

The Bendigo Fire District Strategic Fire Prevention Plan (Draft) 2002 is available for public comment. It can be examined at the DNRE office in View St, Bendigo. FNC members are urged to read the document and comment.

I have copies of the letter from St Arnaud FNC.

Environmental Assessment Review Advisory Committee will hold a public hearing in Melbourne from Aug 15, and which will continue for four weeks. A preliminary hearing will be on 5 August, to make arrangements for the main hearing. I have copies of the information circular.

CD ROM Wild Things of the Bendigo/Castlemaine area. Funding has been received from the City of Greater Bendigo, Central Goldfields Shire Council, Dept of Infrastructure, Mt Alexander Shire Council, Macedon Ranges Shire Council, Norman Wettenhall Foundation, Vicroads, DNRE and Parks Victoria. Work is proceeding, and the launch date is expected to be in October.

Wanted - weed spotters. DNRE is establishing a network of "Weed Spotters" across the State to help report potential, new and emerging weeds. It will be part of the Victorian Rapid Weed Alert rapid response plan for potential, new and emerging weeds. Training will be offered. I have more information for interested members.

An amplifier for meetings. A PA system is being considered, for meetings.

Survey of St Arnaud Bushland. St Arnaud FNC would appreciate assistance in carrying out a survey of fauna and flora in the St Arnaud area.

Wednesday afternoon in Spring will begin on the Wednesday after the September general meeting. We need volunteers to lead excursions.

E Perkins.

Disclaimer - The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the Club.

2002 Committee - E Perkins (President) ph 5472 3124, C Morris (VP and Grievance Officer), G Broadway (Secretary) ph 5472 2513, H van Gemert (Treasurer), R Mills (Newsletter Ed & Public Officer), M Badminton, G Harris, B Maund, M Oliver and R Piesse. This newsletter compiled by E Perkins.

Subscriptions for 2002 - Ordinary membership: Single $22, Family $30; Pensioner or student: Single $19, Family $24; Supporting $31. The subscription includes postage of the *Castlemaine Naturalist.*

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club, PO Box 324, Castlemaine. Incorporation #A0003010B

Castlemaine Naturalist August 2002 - Program

General meetings are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) hall at 8.00 pm on the second Friday of each month, except January.

Excursions leave promptly at the times stated, usually on the Saturday after the general meeting. There are NO excursions on total fire ban days. Also note that outdoor excursions are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions.

Business meetings are held at 27 Doveton Street on the 4th Thursday of each month, except December, at 7.30 pm. All members are invited to attend.

Visitors are welcome at club meetings and excursions.

Sat Aug 3. ***Swift Parrot survey.*** Meet at the Octopus (opposite the Castle Motel), Duke St at 8.30 am. Take lunch and morning tea. Groups will search for Swift Parrots, as part of the Australia-wide Swift Parrot survey.

Friday Aug 9. Dr Barry Golding ***The Great Dividing Trail.*** Dr Golding is president of the Great Dividing Trail Association, and was the speaker at the first meeting of the CFNC.

Sat Aug 10. ***Roadside Cleanup.*** 9.00 am. Meet at the Willy Milly corner, outside Taits

Carriages. Some of our regulars will be unavailable this weekend, so your assistance will be appreciated. Time should be for an hour or a little longer. If the weather is unsuitable (e.g. rainy) the cleanup will on Monday starting at 9.30 am.

Sat Aug 10. ***Bung Bong State Forest.*** The forest, between Maryborough and Avoca, is one of the few places left in Victoria where you can find old-growth forest. Leader is Chris Morris. Leave CHIRP (13 Mostyn St) at 1.30 am. We will meet the Ranger at the Maryborough PO at 2.15 pm.

Sat Aug 10. ***Bushcare is not trivial.*** 7.30 pm at the Castlemaine Town Hall. A trivia night with biodiversity, natural resources and landcare as themes. Teams of up to ten will compete for "a range of fantastic prizes.". The CFNC will enter a team. There is room for a couple of volunteers. Contact E. Perkins if you wish to be added to the team.

Thurs Aug 15. ***Broom Pull.*** The annual broom pull at the botanic gardens. 9.00 am to 12.00. Bring stout gloves and morning tea. Park at the corner of Froomes Road and Mary Street. Please try to come for some or all of this broom pull. Many hands make for a quick result.

Thurs Aug 22. ***U3A/CFNC Bird watch.*** Meet at the Octopus (opposite the Castle Motel), Duke St, at 8.30 am.

Thurs Aug 22. Business meeting. 27 Doveton St at 7.30 pm.

Fri Sept 13. Bill and Robyn van Smeerdijk *Namidia*, SW Africa. UCA at 8.00pm

Sat Sept 14. ***Conglomerate Gully***. Riddells Creek. Leader is Penny Garnett. Leave 27 Doveton St at 10.00 am. Take lunch and afternoon tea, and stout footwear.

Wed Sept 18. Wednesday afternoon outing in Spring. The first for 2002. Meet at the Octopus (opposite the motel, Duke St) at 4 pm. Leader: M Badminton.

Wed Sept 25. Wednesday Afternoon excursion no 2. Octopus at 4.00 pm.

Wed Oct 2. Wednesday Afternoon excursion no 3. Octopus at 4.00 pm.

Wed Oct 9. Wednesday Afternoon excursion no 4. Octopus at 4.00 pm.

Fri Oct 11. Dr David McLaren ***The biological control of weeds.*** Dr McLaren is from the Keith Turnbull Institute.

Wed Oct 16. Wednesday Afternoon excursion no 5. Octopus at 4.00 pm.

Fri 25, Sat 26 & Sun 27 Oct . ***VFNCA camp at Ballarat.*** The Victorian Field Naturalists Clubs Association Spring Camp will be held this year at Ballarat and conducted by the Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat.. There are full and half-day excursions on Saturday, and excursions on Sunday morning. On Friday evening there will be an introductory slide show, and the Ballarat FNC 50th Anniversary Dinner will be held on Saturday evening, when the guest speaker will be Tim O'Ombrain, who will speak on *Local Conservation Issues.* Information and booking sheets can be obtained from E Perkins.

If you have not yet attended a VFNCA campout, why not start with this campout?